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*Abstract*

Hagiography is an ancient study. Believers[[1]](#footnote-1) as well as unbelievers find the history, passion, culture and mystery of the saints’ lives fascinating. It goes without saying also, that although many of the saints likely did live, and perhaps even die for their faiths, too many of them have such fantastical elements of story-telling, such perfect monologues that the church would support before their death, to have been true. A fine example of this is the likely fictitious Teochimus’ introduction of Margaret of Antioch: young, beautiful and of course virginal, coveted by an evil man, undergoes six brutal tortures, is literally consumed by the devil and arises out of his split body after making the sign of the cross. Unique among the saints for having a dialogue with devils, St. Margaret is the patron saint of childbirth and virtually anyone in need, due to her victorious dealings with a demon and his brother. However, much of the discussion, prayers and focus on St. Margaret was actually later embellished by monks encouraging women (especially nuns) to live chastely. The focus on sex and chastity as the focal point for both God and Lucifer dilutes the spiritual fervor of the female saints, simply because their male authors and story-tellers cannot get beyond their sex. St. Margaret and the Katherine Group are not *martyrs* or *saints* like their male counterparts, they are *virgins*, first and foremost. The insult to their story and history, real or not, is perceived in the lack of focus on their characteristics, courage, wisdom or dedication to their faiths, as they are remembered first and foremost as females, and their worth measured by their history (or better, lack thereof) sexual encounters. Some historians strive that their virginal standing empowers them; I contend that St. Margaret’s story is diluted by its focus on sex instead of the qualities that she possessed, that, if she were a man, would have been the focal point of the story, and for which she would have been remembered and canonized.

1. Common terminology for “believers in Christ” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)